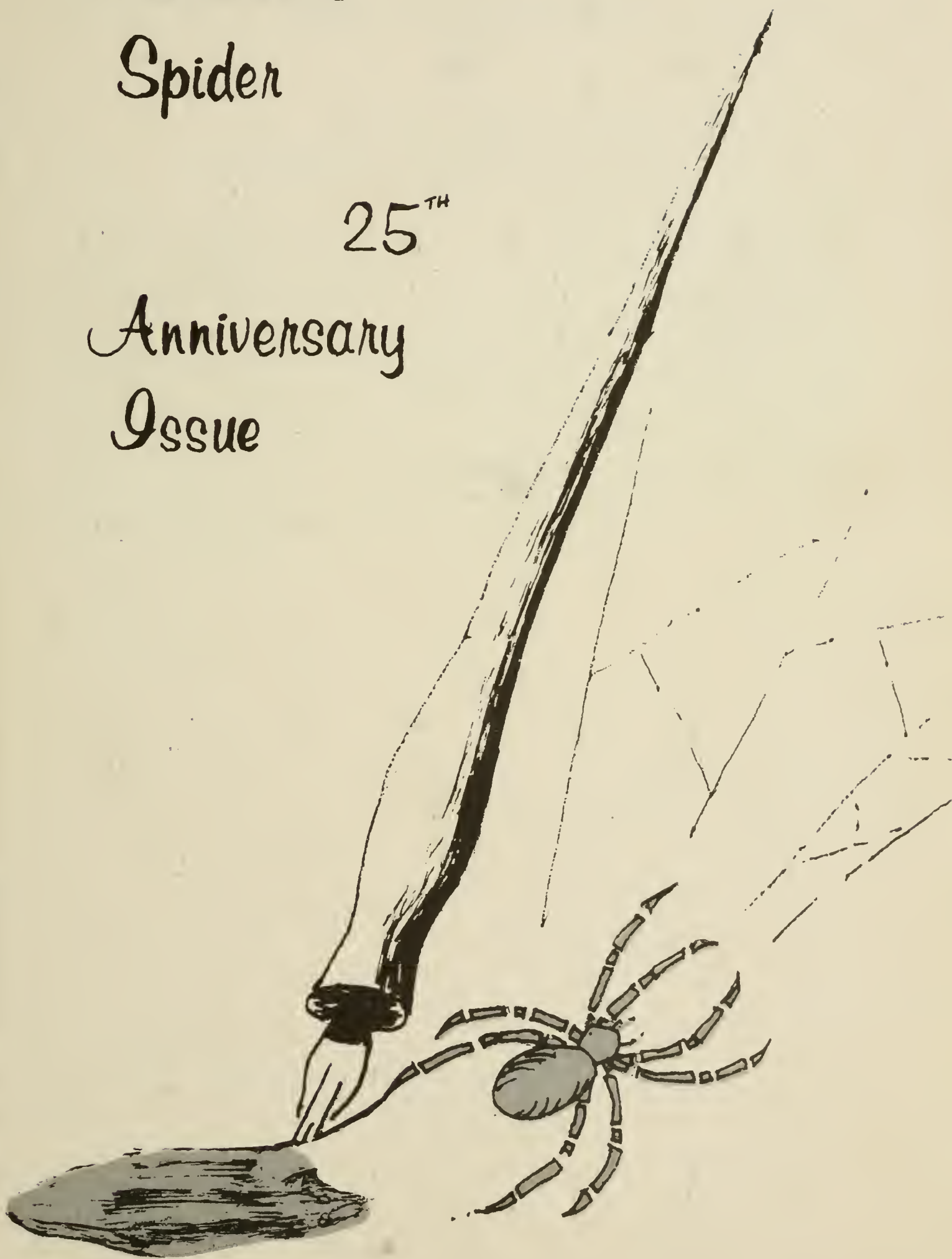


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v. 14 no. 2

The  
Noiseless  
Spider

25<sup>TH</sup>

Anniversary  
Issue



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# THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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Vol. XIV No. 2

Spring 1984

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

*Published by the English Club of the University of New Haven*

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### *Letter from the Editor:*

The idea of an Anniversary issue initially had been a little frightening. It had never been done before and it meant going back to the very first "Noiseless Spider" and reading over 300 submissions.

Twelve and a half years worth of art, short stories, poetry and photography by UNH students! If anything, the English Club has learned that the "Noiseless Spider" is more than just a per semester issue. It is a literary heritage rich in creative ideas and inspirations. UNH students from as far back as 1972 are the life blood source of such inspirations. It is to them that this magazine is dedicated.

Thank-you  
Adria DiBenedetto  
Assistant Editor

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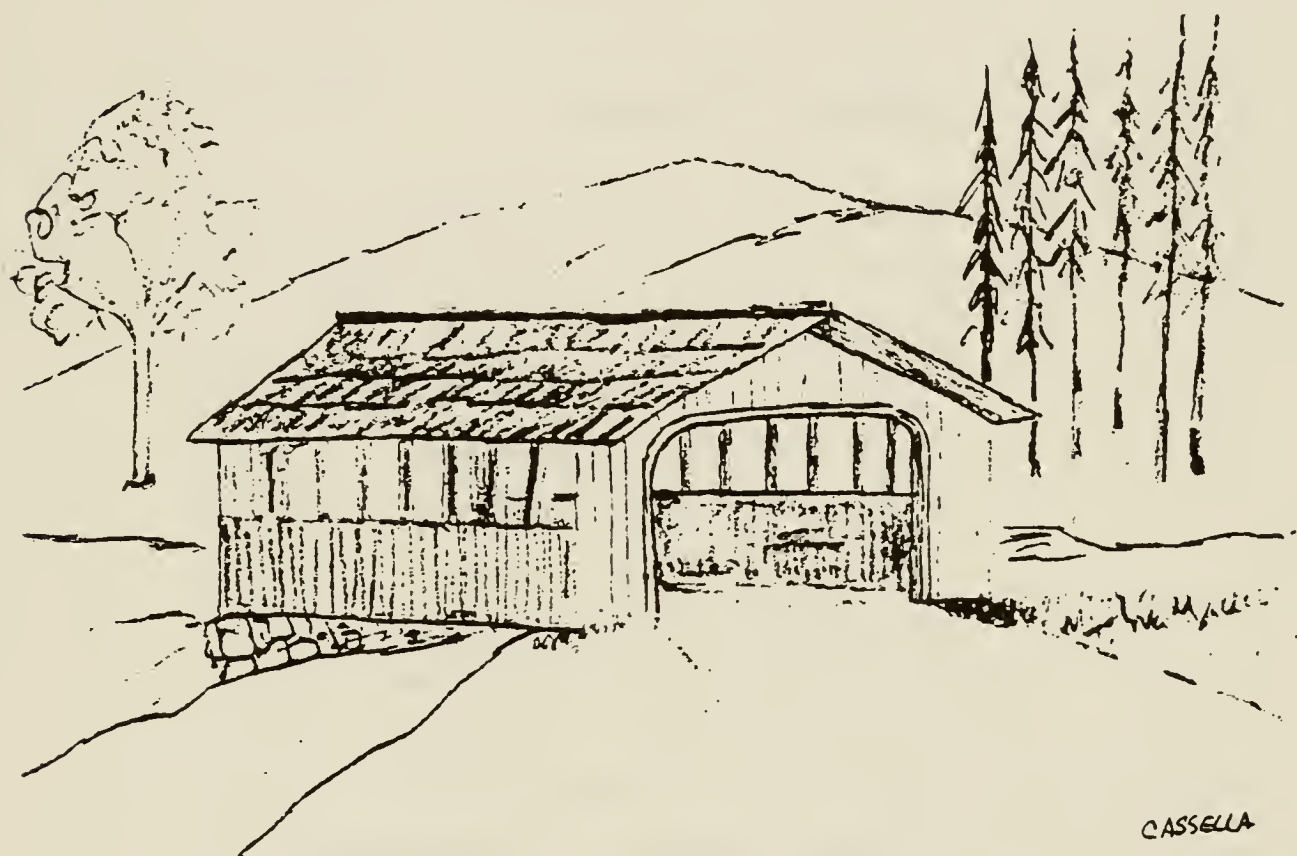
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Dear Chepaitis,

Thank You!

The English Club





## Winter Sonnet

*Can love then tend its summer fires  
When even autumn's winged choirs  
Do flee before this sudden chill,  
And shorn of every sweet embrace  
Think kindly still upon that face  
Whose stern composure bodes but ill?*

*Devotion learned in temperate clime  
Soon withers; love to master time  
And tempest must be firmer still  
Than that which batters it; must lie  
At peace, the cruel wind's quiet eye;  
Must yield, and yielding, gain its will.*

*Such love will hold thy graces sing  
'Till all my winter turns to spring.*

— Noreen Dorenburg



## **Grandpa**

*Walking through the park  
I saw him.  
He was staring at me,  
but his eyes held no life.  
He sat on the bench  
unaware of the brilliant colors  
of the foliage surrounding him.  
He didn't look up when the sun began to splash  
orange rays across the sky as it began its descent.  
He held on tightly to the cane  
that was artistically painted  
a bright shade of red on the end.  
But he never saw it.  
All he ever saw were the horns honking  
and the kids yelling.  
He never saw me.*

— Cindy Bellin

## To Pierre, With Love

I must have let the phone ring at least twelve times before I decided it might be important enough to answer. The grayness of the dawn was in the room, gently covering everything. I could see the faint streaks of pink and orange in the sky behind the pines outside the apartment house. I crawled out from under the covers and tripped over the cat. I picked him up, the dear creature, kissed him and threw him on the bed. The room was a mess. I could still feel the effects of last night's beer and vaguely remembered a good time with friends in Naples. Naples was the bar we frequented most often. I stumbled into the kitchen. The phone stopped ringing as soon as I got there but it started again in a matter of seconds. I clutched the receiver and grunted into it. My eyelids were heavy with lack of sleep and the floor was cold under my bare feet.

"Is that you Maria?" No one ever calls me Maria except my Aunt Elizabeth. My name is Maria Samantha and everyone calls me Sam.

"Yeah," I answered. Who else could it be, I mean, who did she think lived here, Madame Pompadour or someone? Aunt Elizabeth never failed to irritate me and the early hour did not help matters at all. I was hoping that she wouldn't launch into a speech on how my mother had completely neglected my upbringing. Must I be such a rude child, must I butcher the King's English with such vulgar expressions as Yeah. Was it so hard to correctly enunciate the word Yes? She really bugged me. I was 24 and she still called me a rude child.

"I'm so sorry to wake you, I know you're not an early riser like myself." She sounded snide, as usual. I wanted to say "Screw you" but I cleared my throat instead. I mean I tried to clear my throat but was having a hard time breaking through the layers of nicotine.

"I have some very, very sad news," her tone of voice changed completely, it almost sounded pious and reverent.

"What is it, Aunt Elizabeth?" God, I sounded like a croaking frog. I tried again, in vain, to clear my throat.

"Do you have a cold, Maria?", he voice was sharp now. Aha! that's what happens to girls who go out galavanting at all hours of the night. Nice, decent girls don't go out drinking, therefore, never catch colds. She was probably dying to ask me why I couldn't at least try to be a nice, decent girl.

"No, Aunt Elizabeth, I am perfectly well," I rasped. "What is the sad news?"

"Now don't get upset, Maria, I don't even know how to break this to you," again her voice was pious and reverent, "dear Aunt Eloise passed away last night." I wanted to indulge in a good laugh, I just couldn't handle the piousness in her voice. As if Eloise's death meant anything to her. She had hated Eloise's guts since they were children and they both hated my mother's guts. My mother had been the youngest sister, younger than they by a good fifteen years. Nothing my mother had ever done had ever been right in their eyes, least of all the fact that she had given birth to me. I was an illegitimate child. Mother had been very beautiful and talented. She had been an artist. She had died four years ago in a plane crash.

"Maria, are you listening to me?" She sounded nasty and impatient.

"Of course, Aunt Elizabeth," I lit a cigarette by the stove and picked up the cat who had abandoned the comforts of the bed to supply me with moral support by rubbing against my legs.

"I tried to reach you last night but you weren't in." Her voice was very catty, the inquisitive old ass.

"I know, I was out," I answered. I could tell she was dying to ask me where I had been, the phony old bitch. Aunt Eloise had been dying of cancer for the last two years, so her death was no tragic surprise. She had become a very wealthy, childless widow at an early age and Elizabeth hated her for it. All Elizabeth wanted was her money, which is why she had visited Eloise once a week, for a whole hour, for the last two years. It made me sick. I could picture her at the graveside in her black, tailored pantsuit, clinging to her idiot-husband's arm, lifting her black veil occasionally to reveal her puffy, red-rimmed eyes. She would stand there and dutifully cry for 15 minutes. She was a great one for performing her duty and maintaining appearances. Her puppy-dog son would be there, tagging along behind her. I sort of felt sorry for cousin Albert, he led such a stuffy, obedient life. I know he had really liked my mother but had never been allowed to visit us. We only met once a year at Christmas while we were growing up. The last time I saw him was at mother's funeral. They had all come and shed tears of duty. Not



once during her whole life had they understood or loved her, yet they were shameless enough to weep for their dear, dead sister. Her death hadn't really changed too much except that I had an empty hollow inside of me right under my heart. The streets looked exactly the same as they did before, the sky was just as blue, and my toothache had not gone away during the whole painful ordeal. The only difference was that I would never see her again. I started crying as I remembered her funeral and lit another cigarette.

"Maria," her voice intruded into my thoughts, "you don't sound very well and I don't believe you have been listening to a word I've been saying. Just take note that the funeral will be at 11 o'clock, so please don't be late." She drew a deep breath, took a long pause, and added in a rigid voice, "I believe you've been mentioned in the will." That did it, I had to laugh.

"Aunt Elizabeth, I won't even try to explain, but don't expect me. I'm not going. Goodbye." Another long pause. She hung up without saying goodbye. I wiped my face on my T-shirt and crawled back into bed with the cat.

— Judy Magyar

## *Maydreams*

*My mind purchased  
A ticket on a cloud  
Today . . .  
And rode the wind  
To you and no other sky.*

— Brian K. Wallace

*From a snowy school lot  
porcelain apples fly,  
shattering on giggling tots  
and other passers-by.*

— Cheryl Ann Quigley

*china pattern:  
an orange potato bug  
walks the rim  
of my blue willow  
rice bowl*

— Mike Parker

## *A Poetic Point of View*

*Speak to me, poetically, of life and love and things to come,  
And I will forever be thy center,  
Thy formal core,  
From which I shall grow into the soul of your existence.*

*For you and I will be but one,  
A central bond, a central force.  
An informal "meeting of the minds" will be the elasticity  
That keeps our boundaries intact  
Yet forever limitless  
In love of life.*

*But be not scientific, my love,  
For thou shalt lose me to a more Poetic Source,  
That kindles the flame of my excitement  
For the poetry beneath the perplexity of our world  
Yet undiscovered and, gladly so.*

— Adria DiBenedetto



## THE WATCH

The carnival was an annual summer event in Edgemont. Glaring lights of every color were reflected in the stagnant water of the river which bordered the town park. The territory of a stately gazebo in need of paint was now invaded by large clumsy structures that etched jerky arcs and circles in the clear night air. Despite the carnival's vulgar intrusion upon the graceful serenity of the town, people were uncontrollably drawn to it. Discontentment gnawed at the edges of their peaceful existence, and they welcomed the bright lights of the carnival that beckoned them to glimpse a world beyond the cattle grazing in the fields and the daily mail train.

From the front porch of his house, Jeffrey Martins could see a hemisphere of light glowing against the night sky as though a space ship had just settled in the middle of town. If the wind shifted just right he could faintly hear the shrill grinding of gears mingled with the tiny carnival music. He felt deep in his pocket for the change he had worked so hard to earn during the past months. Looking through the screen door back into the lighted kitchen, he watched his mother cleaning up the supper dishes. He felt a little guilty rushing off to the carnival when he thought of the meager meal that had been their supper. Times were hard with his dad out of work and Jeffrey could see increasing concern mirrored in the faces of his parents.

Everyone would soon forgive his apparent selfishness. Tonight he had a purpose. Tonight there was finally a chance to really help out the family. Jeffrey could vividly remember last year's carnival and the glittering watch that was by far the best prize of all. Last year he had been just a kid and had spent all of his money on rides and cotton candy. But this year was different. For months he had dreamt of the look on his dad's face when he opened the case containing the watch. Jeffrey would act nonchalant, as though it was the least he could do for the family. Yeah, things would really look up then. The cloud which had settled over the house would lift and light-hearted laughter would once again fill the rooms.

"Jeffrey, Jeffrey," his mother called from the kitchen. "Don't stay out too late tonight. Is David out there yet?"

"No, ma." His eyes searched the dirt road that stretched into the darkness for a sign of his friend. He was eager to be gone before he was bombarded with more instructions from his mother. Then he heard a familiar whistle, and David emerged from the darkness.

"Ya ready?" he asked as he leaped the three porch steps and joined his friend.

"Yea, I've been waitin' for ya. Let's get goin'. Ma, we're leavin' now. See ya later."

His mother came to the screen door wiping her hands on a gingham dish towel. "Remember, not too late now. We'll be waitin' up for you and be careful."

Jeffrey nudged his friend toward the porch steps. "Ya, ma, okay. See ya later."

She watched the boys head down the road toward town. "Have a good time" she called after them.

Jeff turned and momentarily gazed back at the silhouette of his mother, dark against the lighted doorway. Then both boys raced down the road at top speed.

As they neared the wire fence edging one side of the park they paused, awed by the chaos of sight and sound which confronted them. The carnival seemed to have a life of its own like a large animal which has crouched to rest itself in their park. Standing outside the fence they were observers at a fantastic show. For a fleeting moment an uneasy fear of being swallowed up by the unfamiliar animal seized them. Then, recognizing a few faces in the crowd, they dove under the fence and scrambled to become one with the shifting noisy crowd.

David tapped Jeffrey's arm and pointed skyward. "Gees, look at that ferris wheel. The cars are actually turnin' upside down. My brother told me about that thing. We oughta go on that before we eat anything. A lot of people puke after goin' on that thing. It's really a blast." He stared in wonder at the glittering, whirling machine before him.

Jeffrey looked up at the ferris wheel. "You go ahead on it, David. There's Fred and some of the guys buyin' tickets. I wanna get over to the games.



"Well, cripes, I thought we could . . . " but he didn't bother to finish as he saw the set look on Jeffrey's face. He knew that any argument was hopeless. "Okay, okay. I'll meet ya over by the games then. Fred, hey Fred. Wait up!"

Jeffrey watched his friend join the ticket line and was tempted to follow behind him for just one ride. Instead he turned and began to weave his way through the crowd in the direction of the games.

He searched the booths scattered randomly about the down-trodden lawn. Finally, near the far corner of the park, he saw a group of people clustered around a little wooden structure. The crowd was restrained by a fence which circled a pyramid of neatly balanced glass bowls. Each glass bowl was covered with a shallow plate. People were tossing nickels trying to get them to light atop one of the plates. In each bowl there was a prize. The bowls closest to the bottom and easiest to win offered the cheaper prizes. As the pyramid climbed, the prizes got better. Jeffrey's eyes quickly traveled up to the top and there, just as it had been last year, was perched the gleaming gold and silver watch.

Jeffrey reverently stood and stared at the watch for some time as though he were a worshipper in the presence of a god. Then the clinking of the nickels slipping off the shallow plates brought his mission back into focus. He had practiced for months in the dimly lit garage behind his house, mastering the techniques of the nickel toss game. A secret sense of superiority engulfed him as he observed the other players. His eyes caught some of the many faces crowded around the playing area. The gay and carefree expressions surprised him. So many nights he had envisioned the crowd cheering him on and the unified shout of triumph as he won. Somehow he felt the others should understand how important this night and this game were to him. Now as he reached deep into the pocket of his dungarees and felt for a quarter he realized he was quite alone in this crowd of merry-makers.

Within the wooden enclosure with the plates and the nickels and the watch dwelt the operator of the game. He was a huge man with many bulges of muscle gone to flab. Although the evening was cool and pleasant there was a sheen of perspiration on every visible

bulge as though the man had just run a race or emerged from a steam bath. The hair on his body seemed to grow wherever it chose. To Jeffrey it appeared as though the hair from his balding crown had shed and transplanted itself on his back and arms and shoulders. The man constantly paced back and forth and around the pyramid like a mythical dragon protecting its treasure and spewing forth an endless stream of words.

"Step right up here. Let this little lady have a chance now. That's it. Give 'er a little room. Oh, too bad, but very close. You've really got a knack with this, ma'm. Care to try again? I think you've got it now." The woman, dazzled by the neverending banter of the man, looked to her husband nodding her head, and he handed her another two nickels. Meanwhile, the carnival man, seeing that the woman was hooked, moved around the circle to fresher prospects. He spotted Jeffrey sandwiched in between the adults and particularly noticed the hand clenched around the quarter. Reaching down to the change-holder hanging off his belt, he extracted five nickels and offered them to Jeffrey on the flat of his palm.

"Here ya go, son. You look eager to give 'er a shot. With that pitchin' arm a' yurs you'll be a havin' ta bring yur daddy's pickup down here ta haul off yur loot! Here, give the kid some room now. That's it. Give 'im a chance now."

Jeffrey quickly traded his quarter for the five nickels. He snatched the change apparently wanting to make as little contact with this man as possible. Feeling the cold of the nickels against his palm, he suddenly felt an impulse to take his nickels and turn and run. He wanted to run past the glittering terrifying ferris wheel and past David and Fred and the guys standing in line holding tightly to their tickets. He wanted to forget about the watch and the nickels and the strutting, barking man behind the wooden fence. He longed to run back towards that warm, familiar rectangle of light glowing in the darkness and the lady waiting for him there.

"Well, give 'er a try son. Haven't got all night. These folks are anxious to get in here, too."

The image of the carnival man standing before him brought Jeffrey back to the reality of his trembling hands. Annoyed and



ashamed of his temporary lapse, he shook his head slightly and straightened his spine hoping that the boldness exhibited in his posture might somehow permeate his mind. He glanced up at the watch. "Oh yeah, sure mister."

Jeffrey chose a nickel from the five and tossed it toward the pyramid. He won a small plastic whistle, but no watch. Attempting to block out the chaos of the carnival he concentrated harder on his goal. With each succeeding toss he felt certain that this was "the one." But it wasn't until many nickels later that his certainty became a reality. With only thirty-five cents remaining in his pocket, he threw the lucky nickel. As far as Jeffrey could tell, each nickel had been thrown in exactly the same manner. That one nickel, though—that one nickel, instead of sliding off the plate and down the pyramid landed squarely with a solid metallic clink, and Jeffrey knew from the sound alone that the nickel would not slide down to join the others.

The man, experienced at making the most of a bad break, immediately ran over to Jeffrey and held his hand high in the air as though refereeing a prize fight. "We have a winner, folks. We have a winner here. Nice goin', son." The man went on about "the winner" until the crowd seemed to be losing interest. Jeffrey was embarrassed to be the main attraction at this show and was most anxious to get his watch and leave. With a flourish the man finally removed the watch from the plate and put it in a box and handed it to Jeffrey.

"Congratulations, son," the man bellowed with mock enthusiasm as he addressed the crowd. "Run along now, and let some of these other folks have a go at it." But looking down he saw he was talking to an empty space. As soon as Jeffrey had the watch, he turned and ran, disappearing into the crowd. He crossed the carnival grounds and stopped when he reached a spot behind a booth next to the quiet river.

He sat slowly on the damp grass and stared down at the blue box resting in his hands. Finally he felt the elation that was squelched by the operator at the booth. Alone there with his prize under the twinkling night stars, he lifted the blue lid and set it gently along-

side him. He raised the watch from its cushioned bed and held it up for appraisal in the glow of the moon. But the moment did not ring true. Something felt wrong to Jeffrey. Like a pesty animal tugging his sleeve, a small doubt which was thus far only an irritation persisted in tainting his glorious moment. The watch cradled in his adoring hand did not have the cold feel of the evening's many nickels. His spirits sank slightly, but he was unwilling to face the truth which had already taken seed somewhere deep in Jeffrey's awareness. He held the watch with both hands close to his searching eyes. A twist of the wind knob turned the tiny hands, but the movement was too smooth. Where was the machine "feel" of each little gear meshing precisely with another? Jeffrey held the watch to his ear, but it was a futile gesture, for he already knew the truth, and the unfairness of it begged for a miracle from some higher power. He finally forced open the back of the watch, and a hollow cavern confronted the boy. For a moment all he could hear was the empty words of the carnival man, his clammy hand holding Jeffrey's high in the air. He finally understood more of that man who had been a puzzle to him before: his fast talk, nervous packing, jingling change-holder.

Jeffrey felt a deep, unfamiliar anger as he flung the watch towards the glass surface of the river. The clear reflection of the carnival shattered into a million shimmering ripples as the watch disappeared into the water. For a long time Jeffrey focused on the spot where his prize had sunk. The ripples gradually subsided, and the smooth-mirror reflection replaced them.

"Tomorrow," Jeffrey thought, "tomorrow it will only be a reflection of a small bandstand in a quiet park." And he felt a little glad, as though there was some small triumph for him in this knowledge.

After some time Jeffrey got to his feet and turned in the direction of home. He heard a voice behind him which seemed to call to him from the past. "Jeffrey, hey Jeff, wait up." Turning in the direction of the sound he saw his friend David running to catch up with him. "Where ya been? Gees, I been lookin' all over for you! Boy did we have a swell time. We musta gone on that ferris wheel seven times!" David was lost in the excitement that had been his evening. He continued, and Jeffrey absently marched to the chatter of his friend. He felt alone, and with each step that brought him closer to the lighted porch, a strange sense of relief ate away his anger until only *pity* remained when he thought back on the carnival and the pacing man and his pyramid.

— Linda Horning



## *The Red Tide*

*You begin with God,*

*But God got killed  
on a battlefield  
in nineteen-seventeen.*

*So you begin again  
with an ancient man,*

*but you buried the bones  
of a modern man.*

*So you begin again  
with a european  
oriental  
oceanic  
afro-american man,*

*but you face the grave  
of a divided man.*

*So you begin again  
with a russian german  
super immortal  
angelic man.*

— Michael Hughes

## *March of Man*

I stuck a Marlboro between my wind-chapped lips, flicked open my lighter, and lit "that damn weed" as my old lady calls it. I took a deep drag. The minister or priest, whatever, was finishing up some lousy prayer, probably made up in some old shack in Rome. I took another drag off the cigarette, then dropped an ash into my lap. I didn't bother to wipe it off.

I could see my old man's face behind the preacher. Somebody had laid a flower across his chest. Aunt Martha, off to my left, started a whole new batch of whining and tear jerking. I reached into my pocket and tossed her a hanky. My old lady started running over, too, which set off all the women around. I scrutinized their red, twisted faces. All in agony as real as if hell was upon them. I looked at the men. They looked uncomfortable, itching to follow my example and light up, but short of my toughness.

I got my toughness from my old man, the gray-faced guy lying in the shiny brown casket. He taught me real good that life is a bitch and bitchy things happened in it. We had been close, real close, and I'd made him a promise not to even wink at his funeral. Me and my old man, two tough old birds my Uncle Josey used to say. I'd swell up with pride when he said it and punch my pop's arm, getting one back that would send me sprawling, but loving every minute of it. He'd come over, throw me back on my feet, then start a slap-boxing fight that'd end with my nose running red.

I made the cigarette glow bright red as I puffed on it. Another ash in the lap.

"Shit." My old lady cried harder. Aunt Martha got up and ran from the room. They thought, as women will, that I swore because I missed my old man. Typical. The preacher shut up and headed for the door.

"Shit." I just slipped out. I wasn't sure why. Everybody started hugging and crying and leaving. Pretty soon we were all alone, me and my old man.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we are going to close now. If you wish you may see the deceased again tomorrow from seven to eleven."

One of those sneaky parlor bastards had creeped into the room. I lit into him good, telling him in a variety of four-letter words where

he could place his seven-to-eleven. He left, his eyes a couple of inches bigger, his face as red as the rose on my pop's chest.

I walked up to the casket. I looked down at the dead face of the man who had taught me how to be a man.

"C'mon, old man," I shouted. "Let's do a little slap boxing. I danced around, weaving in and out like Muhammad Ali. I remembered the past few years, my old man's reflexes slowing down. I started faking slowness, but I think he caught on because he tried to nail me good one time. I acted on reflex and pegged. He fell backwards, just like I had when I was a kid. He had laughed and patted me on the shoulders.

I stopped acting like a fool, dropped my cigarette into the worn carpet, and squashed out its glow. I brought out my pack and put another slightly bent cigarette between my lips, not bothering to light it.

"Well, gotta go now, pops." My voice seemed to take on the trembling pitch of a just scolded kid. I breathed deep, then strode up to the casket. I took the rose from his chest and replaced it with the pack of Marlboros.

"Like to like," I muttered, then left, a mist forming before my vision. Probably an allergy to the rose. I tossed the rose into an ashtray on my way out, but it didn't help.

— Bill Potter

## *A Raindrop's Journey*

*My love has taken a raindrop's journey  
Where in misty clouds it was given birth,  
But forced to travel through time while yearning  
An end to its loneliness on this earth.  
It does not know for how long it shall fall  
Before it finds that which absorbs its source.  
Neither may it refute its earthly call,  
For Fate has planned its almost endless course.  
But the course will end when the fall is done  
Bringing forth new life from dry, barren sand  
That once turned pale under the fervent sun  
But shall no more by this heaven-sent plan.  
So did my love immeasurably give,  
For in giving all my love did I truly live.*

— Adria DiBenedetto

## *Unseen Solitude*

*Loneliness locked behind a simple smile  
The lost, aimless calm in  
the sparkling of  
two innocent eyes  
The tranquil expression of a friendly  
glowing face  
Paints the picture of something  
no one can see  
or feel  
Just the shy-quiet of  
someone's reality.*

— Aust Fenn



## FABLE

In a far off land, there once lived a beautiful little boy who was unhappy. The land he lived in was a land of grown-ups, there were hardly any children at all. He didn't even have any friends because the only other child around was a two-year old who lived 16 blocks away. That's how scarce children were. There were no schools or playgrounds or parks or woods. He didn't know that such things had ever existed. He didn't have any games or toys or candy and certainly not any storybooks. He had never seen trees or kittens or even a fishing rod. All he had ever seen was the house he lived in and the street it was on. When he looked out his window, he saw rows upon endless rows of spotless, shiny apartment buildings, each one the same width, each one the same height. Everything was always exactly the same as it had been the day before. It never rained or snowed, it never got cold or hot, and the sky was a uniform pale gray which got slightly darker at night.

This little boy seldom saw his parents. They were too busy attending to their own self-fulfilling careers and competing with their neighbors. He had never met his grandparents, but he knew they were kept in a house far away with many other old people where they wouldn't be a bother to anybody. His sole companion and guide was his automom, the fat little robot who made his meals and made sure he learned his lessons. Once a month his mother came to his room to see if he was growing well, if he was developing clean and neat habits, and to check on whether he was learning. She would then program the automom for the next month and tell the little boy that she would let his father know about his progress.

So the beautiful little boy grew more and more unhappy as the days went by. He couldn't even wish for something better because he had never heard of lucky stars or fairies or daydreams. He spent his time learning facts and doing his daily exercises so he would become tall and handsome like his father. He admired his father very much and whenever he was able to, he sneaked into his father's library to look at the rows and rows of smooth shiny books heavy with facts. Some day he would know as many facts as his father. He loved to look at the graphs and formulas and sometimes he held the books in his hands just to feel their weight.

One day as he was looking at the rows of shelves, he saw a strange thing. It was a slender, queer little volume wedged in between two big, fat science books. It seemed dusty and when he laid his finger on it, the cover felt rough. He was puzzled. What sort of book would be so thin and why had he never noticed it before? He took it down and to his amazement, it was quite weightless. He turned it over and over, searching for a title but found nothing. He felt curious and excited. He was determined to examine it more closely, for he had a strong feeling that here was something special, something he had never experienced before. He tucked the queer little book under his jacket and ran upstairs to his room. His automom was standing in the corner, her lights blinking and questions flashing across her screen, but he just pushed the OFF button. He wanted to be alone.

He curled up in the corner next to the window and looked out on the endless rows of apartment buildings. They were the same as always. He sat there with the weightless little book in his hand and felt a delightful little shiver run up his spine. Something was about to happen. He carefully tried to open the book, but the covers seemed stuck to each other. He softly blew the dust off it and then rubbed it a little with his fist. It began to glow dully, so he began polishing it with his sleeve. The more he rubbed it the more it glowed and soon there was a strange yellow light surrounding him. It felt warm. The yellow light escaped through the window and slowly swirled around the buildings, enveloping them in a haze and soon the buildings disappeared completely. The little boy was incredulous. He had never felt such delicious warmth before. Then he felt a change in the light; in some places it was darker. He stared and stared and finally noticed, emerging from the haze, that there were strange shapes behind the dark spots. The strange shapes were blocking the light; they were tall and thin and had long arms crowned with a green, frizzy substance. Every so often the arms would wave and the dark spots would move and dance and touch each other. There were many of these strange shapes, but not one was the same. The little boy was delighted with these fascinating shapes that swayed to and fro, making the dark spots move and change. He leaped over his windowsill and ran as fast as he could to the shapes. Above him the sky was a deep blue, the yellow light felt warmer, and a breeze blew through his hair and clothes.



His entire body was filled with a strange new feeling, it was *excitement*, and as he approached the shapes, he felt for the first time that he was among friends. "We are trees," said the shapes, bowing gracefully. From all around him, little voices added: "We are leaves, we are roots, I am the trunk, we are birds." He touched everything, felt everything, his hands, his eyes, his nose were alert as never before. "We are shadows" said the dark spots, "come play with us!" He tried to touch the shadow nearest him, but his hand fell right through it. "You can't touch us," the shadows laughed, "but we can touch you." They flickered around him, touching him, caressing him, endlessly moving and fascinating him. He ran around and around, playing with the shadows, climbing the trees, watching the birds flit from one branch to the other. Finally, he grew sleepy and tired, so he lay down on the soft, green grass and closed his eyes. He had never felt so happy before.

When he woke up again, he was lying on the floor under his window, cold and cramped. He jumped up, confused and frightened, and looked out the window. He couldn't see anything but the endless rows of uniform buildings. No trees, no shadows, the yellow light had disappeared, there was nothing but the monstrous rows upon endless rows of spotless, shiny apartment buildings. He felt a terrible darkness and emptiness inside himself and he began to cry bitterly. He had never cried before, nor had he ever felt such a great loss before. But as he was sobbing he felt his elbow touch something on the windowsill. He looked down and to his surprise he saw the queer, weightless little book lying there next to his arm. He stopped crying and picked it up, he held it in both hands and stared at it in amazement. Suddenly he knew that the yellow light and the trees and the shadows would come back anytime he wanted them to, and he knew that many more delightful things were in store for him. All he had to do was guard the little book carefully and it would open doors for him and make fabulous things happen.

He carefully tucked it under his jacket and ran to his automom. He pressed the ON button and let her bring his dinner and books. Strangely, he didn't feel the usual heaviness as he got into bed; in fact, he felt light and excited. For the first time in his life, the beautiful little boy fell asleep feeling happy.

— Judy Magnar

## *More or Less*

*Babies crawling over Mothers  
Mothers crawling over Fathers  
Fathers crawling over paperwork  
Paperwork crawling over desks  
Desks reduced to forests  
Forests reduced to wood  
Wood reduced to paperwork  
Paperwork reduced for Fathers  
Fathers have more time for Mothers  
More babies crawling over mothers  
    Babies, Babies, Babies  
Mothers and Fathers  
Babies, Mothers, Fathers—Families  
Household, Wood, Paperwork  
Paperwork, Paperwork, Desks  
    Ulcers, Stress, Doctors—Less Babies  
    less Families, less Mothers and Fathers  
    less Paperwork, less desks, less doctors  
More Forests, More Wood, More Toothpicks*

— Karen M. Mattimore

## Story

There was a café in town that I used to frequent regularly. It was a quiet little place with not much of a clientele except for a few students and Communist activists. The police dutifully raided it once every two months but never really took anyone, for the people who congregated there tended to be harmless and phony. At the time I was very interested in a certain pseudo-Communist and we met there almost every night for drinks. I believe he was trying to convert me to the cause.

It was located on the first floor of a rather ancient building in the heart of the university section. The side facing the street was flanked by a narrow balcony that was used for the upkeep of a few scraggly potted palms. There were tall glass windows all along opened to the noise on the street and the cool evening breeze. The tables had once been highly polished but now were carved up with dates, names and political slogans. Running parallel to the balcony on the other side was a long, narrow bar that matched the tables. The wall behind the bar was painted a deep red and was completely covered with an assorted collection of mirrors of all sizes and shapes. The only thing of worth in the whole café were the mirrors; some were expensive antiques.

One night I was sitting in my usual corner waiting for my friend. Punctuality never has been the fashion in these parts, but he was notorious for being extreme. I felt it was safe to order a gin and tonic and settle down with my sketch pad for a half hour of tentative drafting. I've gathered some good material in that café. The room was empty except for an unkempt looking young man dozing in one of the corners and the waiter, whom I've drawn at least sixteen times. Nothing very inspiring. I lit a cigarette and blew smoke rings, watching with great interest as they curled towards the cracks in the ceiling only to disintegrate halfway up.

The door opened. It was too early for my friend. Maybe luck was bringing me a likely model. I was expecting the customary long hair and jeans; this middle-aged woman was a surprise. She stood in the



doorway, hesitant, her eyes searching the room for someone who obviously wasn't there. She came in and sat at the table next to mine. Good! Just the right distance. I opened my box of charcoals and examined her with a critical eye. Her face was hard and anxious; the make-up on her sallow face was overdone. Her clothes were discreet and expensive, and I thought she probably shopped the same stores my mother did. The waiter approached in an obliging manner, but I could see he was as puzzled as I. She certainly was not the everyday patron. I heard her tell him that she was expecting someone and that she would like a cup of coffee, black.

I blew a few more smoke rings, one of which nearly settled in her careful coiffure, and started to sketch. She sat stiff and tense without touching the back of the chair; her eyes never left the door, her fingers were curled around each other and I could see the whites of her knuckles. She was oblivious to the coffee the waiter placed in front of her. Her eyes were wide and motionless, and I began to sense a definite terror as I started drawing her legs. They were crossed at the ankles, one foot jolting the other with quick, nervous motions. I was having a hard time with her legs but I was nearly finished by the time André finally appeared on the scene. He kissed me hello and gave his routine apology for being late. He immediately launched into a drawn-out account of his diurnal activities and the idiocy of present-day politics. His speeches never required

much attention, so I concentrated on the woman. Whenever the door opened, she would blush deeply and stiffen. I was beginning to wonder about her. Who could she be waiting for in this fake little hang-out, what could be causing such anguish? By now I could almost smell her fear. Her coffee had long ago stopped steaming.

I finished my sketch and turned my attention to André. We smoked and drank and talked and it was getting late. The room was full of smoke, quite a number of people had turned up. Whoever she was waiting for had no intention of coming. We prepared to leave. I stubbed my last cigarette while he went off to pay the bill. I stood up and gathered my drawing material. To my surprise, for I was positive she would sit like that all night, she too stood up and slowly turned to face me. We stood three meters apart. She was exactly as tall as I was. For some reason I became very nervous and wished that André would stop dawdling at the bar. She very deliberately opened her bag and, to my utter amazement and terror, drew out a tiny black pistol. I remember that she stared at me with very blue eyes for an eternity while I struggled to find a possible motive that she might have for shooting me. I passed out.

I found out later that she shot herself and that she shattered one of the antique mirrors on the red wall behind the bar.

— Judy Magnar

## *I sit in black solitude*

*I sit in black solitude*

*motionless, quickly becoming thoughtless*

*I see nothing and hear only*

*the sound of the waves meeting the shore*

*and the brisk November breeze*

*fighting the trees and bushes for the*

*last leaves . . .*

*A sense of peace—*

*I'm no longer sitting, no longer*

*standing,—no longer aware*

*of myself: I'm lost in the blackness*

*Then softly, purely the music:*

*Clear tones piercing the blackness,*

*dancing throughout the room*

*in 3-dimensional invisibility—*

*But now—one tone or many?*

*I'm not sure, but it is music*

*Music as I've never heard before:*

*not man's music, no*

*pure music, music with*

*no instruments, no voices*

*yet varied music, music with*

*harmony, melody:*

*Beethoven, Bach, Zappa, lullabies*

*All, and yet none of these*



*And I listen. No I more than listen  
I am part of it, I am necessary for it  
And I understand  
    (The understanding comes with the music,  
        softly, gradually  
And these glimpses of understanding,  
    they grow as the force of the music grows)  
I don't know what this music is  
    but I do understand it.  
Sporadic waves of pleasure  
    travel through my body  
A lingering pleasure  
    felt in my stomach, my chest,  
        my arms, my legs—  
now everywhere uncontrollable  
    pleasure, an eddy of delicious sensations—  
    completely intoxicated by this blackness!  
    this music! this pleasure!*

*It ebbs*

*Light slowly penetrates the room  
        my eyes, my body becomes  
        visible, I regain consciousness  
I sit now in dark solitude  
    The music gone*

— Peter Moore

## *The Corporation*

*Join the ranks of the anthill . . . .  
It's called the corporation.  
Shake the hand of Uncle Sam  
And sign your application.  
The "Big Desk's" floor becomes  
your ceiling,  
Dollar-eyes . . . discuss you with feeling.  
They settle your life with credit cards  
And suburban boxes with "Turf-Builder"  
yards.*

*You're passing through the factory,  
An elementary part.  
A pencil-mark in the Master Plan,  
A clock inside your heart.*

*You used to be a barefoot boy,  
And college hopes were high.  
Now you're buying golfballs,  
And picking out your tie.  
They said success was up ahead,  
If you had that "selling spirit!"  
You bit your tongue until it bled . . .  
And now the world can't hear it.*

*How will you feel when you're looking back,  
From the porch of your Pension Plan?  
Would you say if you died tomorrow,  
You died a happy man?*

— Steve Shay

## Nova

The full August moon more than sufficiently illuminated the couple's way through the trees, Billy didn't need the extra light though. He and Carol had been there so many times he could have sniffed his way. The gauze-like light of the moon made the forest look like the ruins of an ancient temple; with trees as pillars and bushes and rocks the toppled remains of once grand statues; tributes to things that were once great.

Wearing a blanket as a cape, he ran, danced and leaped among the ruins; stopping now and then so Carol could catch up.

"I feel like Oberon, King of the Fairies," he said. "Where is that Bottom? I want to fuck up his head."

"What are you talking about? And don't say that word, it's disgusting."

"Forgive me, my love. On this ethereal evening; those things do best please me that befall preposterously!" He then drew the blanket around him and ducked behind a tree. "Now what are you doing?" she said with annoyance while clasping the picnic basket with both hands. "I disappear like a wily spright, my queen. But at your insistance I shall once again lead us to sacred ground."

"I know the way," she whispered. He took hold of her hand when she stumbled on the path.

"You O.K.?"

"Yes. Keep moving."

When they reached the tiny clearing, Billy unknotted the blanket and waved it around him like a matador, spreading it evenly on the ground, then somersaulted onto it landing supine. "You have got to be the strangest person I've ever met," she said. "That's why you love me, 'cause I'm so unique. Come out of the forest Titania!" he said to the silhouette. "Let me gaze upon your precious countenance." Carol sat next to him, crossing her legs and placed the basket in front of her. "No, no, no. That won't do at all," he said. "Lie down next to me. I have something for you."

"What is it? Is it in the basket?"

"You'll never know if you don't lie down right here," he said pushing his finger into the blanket by his side.

Carol slowly unfolded her legs and stretched out on her side resting her head on her arm. With a sinister laugh Billy gathered her in his arms and pressed his lips against hers. She pushed him away and rolled onto her stomach, burying her face in her folded arms.

"It's August and you're covered with ice. What's wrong? You miss Florida that much?" She sighed and turned her head away from him.

"I'm not staying," she said. "I'm going to keep my job down there. I like my life there."

"Well that's no reason to turn off to me. When I graduate this May I'll come down to be with you. No problem."

There was a long silence, Billy stared at the back of her head then down toward his feet and the little rushing river about ten feet away. The sound of the falls off to the right made Carol's silence all the more noticeable. If you closed your eyes, the falling waters sounded like the clouds let loose a torrent — a deafening, swamping torrent. "I've decided to go to grad school down there," he said.

"And how will you support yourself? You can't make too much money while you're in school."

"I'll get a part-time job and do some writing too. Another couple years and —"

"I can't wait another couple years. I want to have some stability. I want a nice house; a nice car." Billy thought for a moment. School was his only life for the past six years. He adored learning different things all the time. He enjoyed the freedom. "You're not responsible," she added. "You still live at home. Your mother does your laundry. I have determination now. I'm in line for a promotion already. There's a good chance that I'll be making decent money soon. I want to be successful."

Success. The word wasn't new to him. It didn't mean an apartment in Miami or a sports-car, sunshine life. Success was happiness



and happiness was reading, learning, writing. It was watching the world and telling people about what you've seen. If money, came from that — fine. He wanted to be admired for what he knew, not how much he made a year.

"What's the matter, you don't love me anymore?"

"That's not the point. I've become used to a different life now."

"I thought I was part of your life. We've had some fantastic times together. We've been through a lot together." A pause . . . "We decided to let something go — together. We decided to let it go." He could see tears sparkle in her eyes. Carol bowed her head. "Why did you have to bring that up? We were in high school and much too young to accept that responsibility, I had to do it." "I had always hoped we could make it up to each other. You know — get married and have a family. We could love our children and give them everything; teach them about life — and death."

"Some memories hurt, Billy; some I'll never forget — ever."

Billy looked at the countless stars above him and then at the river. He thought about how you could touch the water and it would flow right on and you could never touch the same place again — never make the same ripple. How different were they? She didn't care about how waves were formed or the theories of the Creation. She didn't care about Mozart, Constable or Jonson. She wanted a house with three bathrooms and a two car garage. She wanted stocks and a tenth floor office with a view. She couldn't even remember who Adam Smith was.

Again she spoke. "You'll be in school forever. And any job you get will never get you enough money to support a family. You're too into your own thoughts." Billy looked at her beautiful face in the moonlight. It looked smooth and white.

"I'm going back to the car," she said. He listened to her footsteps fade into the woods. He was insulted and deeply hurt. She had unlimited desires and needs. Money — he began to despise the word and everything it could buy. If he had it, he could probably

even buy Carol back. He shook his head slowly; what an absurd thought. She is lovely and she will be successful in anything she does because she knows what she wants and how much she wants.

He stood, picked up the picnic basket and walked to the edge of the falls. The water bouncing off the rocks in the moonlight looked like pearls and diamonds tossed into the air. Opening the basket, he gazed at the bottle of 1981 Mouton Cadet, the two crystal glasses and the picture of a diamond ring he cut out of a magazine. Laying the basket in the water, he watched as it tumbled over the falls and was lost in the darkness below. He reached into his back pocket and produced the book of sonnets. Flipping through the pages, he tore out number 116 and let it fall into the water.

His pain wasn't only from her leaving, but from the truth of her words about him. He looked into the sky again and all of the tiny points of light blurred and faded. He closed his eyes tightly. What was that word? The one where stars die but the light continues to shine on those millions of miles away even though the star's essence has been gone for years. He couldn't think of it. It didn't matter anyway.

— R.W. Shortell Jr.

## *Anima*

*She awoke,  
hesitant at first,  
from the enforced slumber  
of continuance.*

*Timid,  
she explored  
and boldness grew  
with discovery.*

*Happy, she ran  
laughing  
touching everything.*

*Smiles came first  
from those who saw her,  
pleased with her antics  
glad for the distraction.*

*But tired they grew  
and quickly.*

*She was different  
and frightened them.*

*Seeking to restrain  
they angered her.*

*Aroused, she continued,  
breaking down the hedges,  
scattering stones  
on the manicured lawns.*

*Pursued  
by the handyman,  
and others,  
keepers of the norm.*

*Pursued  
by myself,  
but for different reasons.  
Leaving the sun  
she led to the red darkness  
of cedar forests,  
her pursuers retreating  
fearing the unknown.  
Still, I continued,  
though hazards barred the way  
and darkness ruled unchallenged.  
On she ran  
past unseen horrors,  
raging waterfalls,  
fathomless rivers  
that threatened to engulf.  
On she ran  
and on I followed  
her call  
my siren song.  
She pauses now  
only to entice  
to insure pursuit  
to show the way.  
All is dark.  
Alone  
I follow, to know  
my only goal.  
Her call sounds clear  
and follow I do . . . . .  
for follow I must.*

— Ron Winter



## *For Joe*

*Little Boy Blue  
Come get your gun  
Your mind's in the battle  
And you're still on the run.*

*Your soul's in the swamps  
Where the enemy lay  
I hope in my heart  
You'll forget it someday.*

*Little Boy Blue  
Come get your gun  
There's wrongs to be righted  
There's wars to be won.*

*Your thoughts are the bullets  
That shoot men down  
You fight for a hobby  
Not a moral or a crown.*

*So if it's reality  
You think you perceive—  
Little Boy Blue  
For you I grieve.*

— Judy de Pietro

## **Nature**

*The beauty of life is in things untold; like swimming in  
water that is icy cold.*

*Like watching the flowers as they grow, or making angel  
prints in the snow.*

*The things found in nature from hour to hour; like climbing  
a mountain, or a rocky tower.*

*Like running together, hand in hand, or running in the water  
along the sand.*

*Like watching the sand, as it runs through your fingers, or  
watching the sunset, as it lingers.*

*Like building a castle out of sand; the beauty of life is  
found in the land.*

— Tamara Bianca Giordana

According to an old Greek tale, it was necessary to bury within the foundations of the Arta Bridge, the wife of the Master-BUILDER—alive—if the bridge were to stand. She was lured to the site and out of love for her husband, she gave herself.

## *To the Bridge*

*The wife of the Master-BUILDER  
washed her hair with herb-water  
she asked the breeze to leave  
the smell of jasmine on her breasts  
the sun to shine his splendor on her—  
the Master-BUILDER will soon send for her  
she will walk the light-filled road  
the road to Arta  
she knows well its bends, its ups and downs  
the oak-tree, waiting for her  
but she will not stop under its shade  
she will not linger to hear the bird-song  
the Master-BUILDER  
the stone-masons, the brick-layers  
wait for her  
for her—the bright-plumaged partridge  
for her—the mountain-antelope  
for her—the swift-footed mare  
the gorge will be fulfilled  
the canyon appeased  
the mortar will hold the arches  
she must walk the light-filled road  
the road to Arta*

— Eleni Fourtouni

## *Child's Memory (World War II)*

### *I*

*Every time I think of it,  
there's a peculiar tickle  
in my throat.  
My hand reaches up  
in a quick, caressing movement.*

*Especially when I clean  
fish  
—the fish my blond son brings me,  
proud of his catch—  
and I must cut off the heads.*

*My hand, holding the large blade,  
hesitates.  
That peculiar tickle comes again.  
I set aside the knife,  
fleetingly I rub my throat—  
ever so lightly.*

*I bring the knife  
down  
on the thick scaly neck  
—not much of a neck, really—  
just below the gills.  
I hack at the slippery, silver  
hulk of bass.*

*My throat itches.  
My hands stink fish,  
drip blood.  
My knife cuts through.*

*The great head is off.  
I breathe.*



## II

Once again the old image comes  
into focus:  
the proud, blond German,  
the shining black boots,  
the spotless green uniform.  
Smiling, he lugs a sack  
into the schoolyard.  
The children, curious, gather.  
He dips his large, ruddy hands inside the sack.  
The children hold their breath.

"What is it? What?  
They must have been  
in our gardens again—  
looting our cabbage."

The children's small, sunburned hands  
with the dirty nails  
fly to their eyes.

No, we mustn't look  
at it.  
It's too horrible.  
But we're full of curiosity.  
Between our tiny, spread fingers  
we see . . . we see . . .

Now the German's laughter is gleefully loud.  
His hand pulls up, by the hair,  
the heads of two Greek partisans.

## III

Quickly I rinse the blood off my knife.

— Eleni Fourtouni

On June 1, 1982, they tore down the house I was born in, the house my grandmother raised nine children in, lost her husband in, grew old in. No big deal. "Redevelopment," they said. I wished they'd said, "renewal"; it has such a hopeful ring to it. But "redevelop" means giving up on the past, starting all over. I wasn't there the day Progress drove down Columbus Avenue, leveling everything in its path: the old Hulls Brewery, grandma's house, my roots.

We were not shocked by the demolition. We'd been expecting it for almost two years, ever since the city "purchased" the house from grandma. Officials said it would be down within a few months, so my mother and father, who lived over grandma on the third floor, planned a big family Christmas celebration — a kind of Last Supper. Family began arriving about 11:00 in the morning that Christmas. They stayed until evening, spreading out into the second and third-floor apartments. I walked in late, to raucous laughter and popping flash bulbs everywhere. In the midst of the chaos my mother appeared, exhibiting a grace and dignity that I have never known to fail her, a grace that has always had a comforting effect on me. She fixed me up with food and drink, then left me to survey the rest of the crowd. Uncle Howard was there, with his vacant stare, a result of the war. And cousin Corey, whose wife left him shortly after his parents died. Then I caught a glimpse, through the scurrying bodies, of a small figure, in a chair, in the corner of the room — grandma, a bulwark of a woman. They would probably have to drag her from this place. I'd like to think she was inspecting her brood with matriarchal approval, but I think she wanted us all to leave so she could reconstruct the order she needed to survive and the memories she'd need to live. I don't know how the rest of them felt, but I was glad the house was coming down. It seemed the only way my parents would leave the hellhole that my birthplace had become.

After Christmas we waited for the ax to fall. We waited through the spring that never seemed to warm Columbus Avenue and through the summer that never failed to burn it. Colorless autumn came and went. No one had the spirit for another Christmas celebration. Finally, early in 1982, my grandmother received official notification of the demolition date.

I was commissioned by the family to take pictures of the old three-story frame homestead before it was reduced to rubble. This

sentimental request was delivered with puzzling stoicism. It reminded me of a woman I once knew who took pictures at her son's wake and showed them, with perfect equilibrium, to her neighbors. As I stood alone in front of the house, camera around my neck, I tried to muster up some emotion. But I was still glad the house was coming down. By now my parents and grandmother had moved out. Their last few months in the house were a nightmare. Surrounding houses were already demolished or abandoned. Fires were often set in the abandoned houses. Once, the flames leaped across a yard to grandma's house. My parents always took pains to make the house lived in, hoping that looters and arsonists, seeing signs of life, would wait. But would the rats? Displaced by fire and demolition, would they converge on grandma's house? It was so very, very difficult to focus on memories of my cousins and me at play in the back yard. I gave up, and began shooting the house. I shot it from every angle I could think of. I included the garage and basement apartment, which my Uncle Norman still used as a base for his little roofing business. Then I moved in closer to include some personal details — the string of mailboxes with family names still on the big "508" near the front door. When I was through taking pictures, I paused to look around one last time. They had only one house left to demolish before they came to a dead stop at the cemetery. I smiled and left. The house came down.

It happens that I can see the rubble from the bus, on my way to work. The first time I saw it I felt disoriented, like those first few seconds, after emerging from a daydream, when you stand in awe of familiar surroundings. After a few more trips past the remains of grandma's house, the reality of the loss settled in my mind, bringing with it a strong sense of resentment. Now, even that is gone. What I'm left with, astonishingly, is a feeling of liberation. My long-suffering friend is dead. No longer must I watch her pride be stripped away, her body assaulted. She no longer exists in the present, only in the past, the happy past. Reinstated to her former dignity, the house is brimming with activity. Corey and I are playing in the living room on the third floor, acting out our favorite T.V. commercial — "*I always come back for Pepsi-Cola.*"

Everything is all right now, for me. But it will be harder for grandma. On May 31, 1982 she phoned Norman at the house to remind him, when he left, to lock the doors.

— Cheryl Ann Quigley



# Something to Sing For a Dying Day

*"What's this—an allegory?"*

*"No; why? Not an allegory—a leaf,  
just a leaf. A leaf is good. Everything's  
good."*

*"Everything?"*

*"Everything."*

— Brothers Karamazov

## First Movement

Follow a story long enough and it will end in death. That is something you can count on, anyway. When I was a kid I would read about cowboys and knights, guys who fought everything and won. The stories would all end the same way: ' . . . and they lived happily ever after'. Later on, late at night when I was alone and lying in the dark, I would think about those stories and I'd wonder what happened next. I mean what happens to you when they say you live happily ever after. It bothered me somehow to think of the cowboys settling down on a farm with a wife and no guns. I never thought of kids. I always felt cheated, as though there was something they didn't tell me.

## Second Movement

I had not thought it would be that way. The old man never seemed old. We had always called him the old man, but we never thought of him that way. His face was young and lean right up to the end and I used to think he looked like Dempsey. He might have made a good fighter if he had had some confidence in himself. That was the way it was with him. He didn't do things. So what does this all mean? I don't know really. All I know is I want to try and remember him and maybe order things. Sometimes I close my eyes and try to imagine his face, but it isn't any good. I can't see him anymore. We



were never very close, although I sensed there was something he wanted to tell me. He'd been through a lot. It wasn't easy being a hobo in the '20's. But there are some things you just can't tell a guy. Not like it was anyway. You try but it only ends up sounding glamorous and not like it really was at all. Maybe that is why he was so quiet. I think about that a lot now, and it still doesn't seem all the way right. It was something more. Like why he never became a fighter.

### **Third Movement**

"Don't move him. Just let him lie there. At least let him go without much pain." Billy could hear the men talking and it felt terrible. He hated them and everything for being so detached. They were talking about him in a way he did not like. "That's a bad wound. Keep the flies off it. Christ I wish we had a doctor. I don't know what the hell to do."

### **Fourth Movement**

The boy waved the burning stick in the night air. Its glowing tip made all sorts of wonderful patterns that left an after-image on the retina. Orange-red fire lining and circling in the dark. It was such wonderful fun to be a creator, he thought, and he'd spin around, holding the stick at arm's length making figure eights, circles, waves and lines that would continue into one another without a break if only he moved fast enough. He did not notice the night. Slowly the red tip began to die out, and the boy got more frantic in his waving. He tried desperately to keep the shapes and glowing existence. The lines were not as thick and it became increasingly difficult for him to maintain their continuity. After the stick died out he stood quietly with his arms by his side. He felt cold standing there in the dark, and the sound of the wind made him feel very lonely, very alone. "The fires won't stay, Mommy. It won't stay. The circles won't stay either. All the lines and circles are gone." He

wanted to hug his mother and cry, but something changed his mind without his noticing it. He stood alone and felt very cold inside. His mother stroked his blond hair and tried to gentle him. "It's only a stick, dear. You can light another one tomorrow. Fires can't burn forever. We'll light another one tomorrow." The little boy knew he was alone now, and didn't feel like crying anymore. But he was very sad. He was also angry in a way he did not understand. He didn't care about the sticks anymore, and he thought about his anger. "I don't want to light any more sticks. I don't want to light them ever again. I hate them."

— John Perry

## *Drumbeat Deer*

*The drum echoed in my brain  
As the heartbeat of a deer against the hunter.  
The quick pulsing of the drummer's blood,  
The rapid fleeing of a hunted deer.  
Vast assortment of a percussionist's tingling bells,  
So assorted are the muscles of a deer.  
Intricate patterns forming a melody,  
Muscles working together yielding speed, grace, and life.  
Veins stretching up a beating arm  
Taut nerves tensed in waiting.  
Explosion of a drumskin, dead air—  
Explosion of a pelt, oozing blood.  
The final note in a song,  
The final breath of life.*

— Christiana Kolf

## *View From the Hill*

Abiit, Excessit, Evasit, Erupit, (He is gone, He is off, He has escaped, He has broken free)

— Cicero

*Inside  
the red  
brick building,  
reading "The Trouble  
Outside" by Whittemore,  
I lean against the window  
watching the world below . . . .*

*and raise  
my fist  
as if  
to smash  
the glass,  
to break the air,  
to suck in the light of things . . . .*

*and yet,  
I turn  
the page,  
and read,  
like everyone else  
trapped  
inside . . . .*

— Michael Hughes



## Amy's Room

I stood in the doorway of Amy's room and watched her pack. She was loading her books into a carton. One after another she tossed them in when I saw one of mine go by. I went over, reached into the carton, and pulled it out. "This is mine," I said.

"I know. Can't I have it?"

"No. No you can't. You've got enough of me already." I went back to my room and took a sweater from my closet. I sniffed it and once I was sure it hadn't been worn I put it on and started out of the apartment.

"Joanne!" she yelled. "Don't go. Please."

I stiffened; then waited for my body to relax and went back to her doorway. "What do you want?"

"Where are you going?"

"Out."

"Out where?"

"Just out. I don't know where. I'm going for a walk."

"When are you coming back?"

"I don't know. Soon."

"You'll come back to say good-bye, won't you?" she pleaded.

"Yeah, sure," I lied. I knew I wouldn't come back to say good-bye. I was going to leave the apartment and not come back until it was all mine again with all traces of Amy wiped out. I couldn't say good-bye. I wouldn't know what to say. I didn't want to hug her. I didn't want to say keep in touch or any of those other polite pleasantries. I just wanted her gone. I started to leave again.

"Joanne!"

"What?" I snapped.

"It's raining out. Don't you want to take an umbrella? You can have my umbrella. You'll catch cold."

"That's the *idea*," I said as I slammed the door behind me.

It was raining quite heavily. I headed down Chapel Street. Not bothering to seek out protection from the rain, I avoided awnings and walked on the edge of the sidewalk as though it were a balance beam. My arms were extended out like wings. The rain rolled off my hand, but my sweater absorbed the water like a sponge. I was drenched by the time I reached Baskin-Robbins. I went in and

ordered a vanilla cone to go. I held the cone out in front of me as I walked to the New Haven Green. I had no intentions of eating it. I just wanted to see how long it would take the rain to wash away the mound of vanilla ice cream. It didn't take long. I sat on a bench in the center of the Green and let the rain fill up the empty cone like a cup of water. When some accumulated, I drank it. I don't think I'd ever drunk rain water before. I put the cone on the ground with the point facing up and systematically crushed it with my soggy sneaker.

I could have been a good friend to her. I could have spent more time with her and I could have talked with her more than I did. I could have been more patient and understanding. And a lot more giving. Or I could have been selfless and spiritual and let her have me the way she wanted. But I'm not any of those things. I kicked her out.

It was my apartment. I found it with no intentions of having a roommate. I was going to use the extra bedroom as a den. When Amy approached me about moving in with me, I hesitated only briefly. The reason I was moving off-campus was because I hated the lack of privacy dormitory life offered, but one person wouldn't be so bad. And besides, I did some swift calculations, my parents were paying for the whole apartment and if Amy gave me half, that would be all that much more spending money every month. She had lived upstairs from me the year before. She seemed nice. All I really knew about her was that she always used to say, "On a scale of one to ten, I'm a negative two." For some reason that used to make me laugh.

I'd thought about kicking her out for a long time. I had actually become quite obsessed with the idea. For months it was all I talked about. But when I began to touch on the subject, she'd remind me of how much I needed her if I was ever going to change and so I'd forget about kicking her out for a while. Also, I was afraid of her. Once I slammed my bedroom door in her face while she was crying. I sometimes got tired of her crying. I'm not very understanding. I got into bed and began to read and when she flew into my room with such force and speed it seemed as though something not quite

human was pushing her and she slapped me in the face. Then she cried even harder and I ended up sitting up with her all night while she tried to convince me that she was the only person in the world who really cared about me. She apologized for slapping me, but, she said, sometimes I drove her to things like that. I said we all have our moments. "Sometimes I hate you, too, Amy." She said she'd help me get over that. I musn't ever hate her because I need her so badly. All my other friends were superficial. And boyfriends only wanted to get into my pants. But she loved me on a higher plane. Sometimes I believed her when she said things like that.

I curled up on the bench and buried my face in my sweater. It smelled of Amy. Damn it. No matter how many times I washed my things, her odor lingered on. I couldn't wash her out. And she had worn everything. She wore my clothes all the time. When she first asked if she could borrow a shirt, I said, "Sure. You don't have to ask. Just take whatever you want whenever." Roommates share clothes all the time. I knew that. But I didn't mean my socks and underwear. It really began to irritate me because not only was she a lot bigger than me and therefore stretching my things out but you never, under any circumstances, want to share your socks and underwear with someone else. I finally spoke to her about it when I discovered she'd been using my toothbrush as well. She said these things made her feel closer to me. I had always thought roommates got close over late-night coffee, but I didn't say that. Instead, I let it go on for a while and then one night set fire to all my underwear and just stopped wearing any.

I finally kicked her out because she destroyed my room. I came home and found her sitting in the midst of shredded papers and torn books. My clothes were strewn around like lifeless dolls. Crumpled photographs of my family and friends lay in broken ashtrays. My night table was overturned. The contents of the drawer spilled out on the bed. She had ripped off the head and one arm of the teddy bear John gave me. Bits of white stuffing trailed from one end of the room to another. There were broken cups and mugs that I'd taken as a reminder of one good night or another. I don't even remember where some of the things came from but that



didn't matter. I knew there was some memory connected with each one and now they were irreparably shattered. She sat in the middle of my fragmented possessions. Her dark hair was tangled and hung in her face, but I could still see her eyes. They stared ahead; not shifting, not blinking. She looked like she was dead. I hoped she was dead. She threatened suicide a lot. Sometimes I thought it was a trick to keep me from going out but sometimes I really believed she meant it. There were many nights I'd come home late sure I'd find her swinging from a rope or sprawled dead on the couch from an overdose of sleeping pills. I used to fantasize about it on my way home. I would always feel guilty but relieved, not unlike how a child must feel upon the death of a senile or invalid parent. If she were dead I would cry a little but then I would be able to return to my life again the way it was before I knew her. And I would have liked that. But she wasn't dead. I saw her sigh. Her large breasts heaved up and fell accompanied by a whistling sound.

I left her there and went to an all-night coffee shop. Country Western music blared from the juke box. I hummed to it and drank several pots of coffee waiting for the night to be over.

The next day I went to class without my books, but that didn't matter as I wasn't paying much attention anyway. I was trying to figure out how to get rid of Amy. I could have forgiven her if she hadn't destroyed everything, but she left nothing untouched. I had every right to make her leave. It was my apartment. Her room was supposed to be a den. I always wanted a den. I would have loved it. I would have spent all my time there. With Amy there I never went into that room. She always came into my room, though. In the middle of the night she would come in and watch me sleep. You can feel that: someone watching you sleep. Sometimes she'd just watch me and sometimes she'd say, "Joanne, I had a bad dream. Can I sleep with you?" The first time she asked me that I said yes but as soon as she got into bed with me I got up and went to sleep on the couch. The next morning she told me that was a cruel thing to do; that she didn't merely want to sleep in my bed, she wanted to sleep with me because she was afraid. But she did just like to sleep in my bed as well. Lots of times I'd come home and find her in my bed.



When I asked her about it she said my bed was more comfortable than hers, but when I offered to switch she didn't want to. I let her sleep with me a few times but after a while I said, "Amy, we all have bad dreams. Go back to sleep and forget about it." Then she would cry and say no wonder no one likes me. I'm so selfish and uncaring. No one is ever going to love me because I'm incapable of returning love. She'd go on with that until I'd sit up and talk with her. She'd tell me, then, that she'd teach me how to love. She'd keep me up all night telling me what a cold person I am, but she's willing to stick by me because she thinks there's warmth in me somewhere that only she can find. I guess the lack of sleep made me susceptible to that kind of talk because I thought that she was right. Once I told her that I was thinking about going to an analyst but she said, "No, no. I'll help you. I know you better than anyone."

When I got back to the apartment she had cleaned up the mess in the room. It wasn't really my room anymore. It was a clean room, but empty. She was on the couch. "I'll pay for it."

"Those things can't be replaced with money."

"I'll fix them."

"They can't be fixed. Everything's destroyed for good."

"Do you hate me now?"

"Yes."

"Joanne, I'm sorry but I didn't want you to have things from other people, people that don't even mean anything to you. I'll get you all kinds of new things," she brightened. "What would you like?"

"A den."

"Huh?"

"I want you out of here. By tomorrow."

"But I have nowhere to go."

"I don't care. You should have thought of that before you ruined everything."

"You haven't changed one bit. A few lousy books are worth more to you than the only person who cares about you. You have no feelings, you know. None. You're a pretty, little, empty shell. You don't feel anything."

"Amy, there were big parts of my *life* in that room."

"No, Joanne. Now that room suits you. Cold, vacant, empty. Just like you. A room with no person. No feelings, Joanne. If I leave you'll have no one, you know. You'll never love anyone and no one will ever love you."

"I don't care."

The rain showed no signs of letting up. That was the nice thing about New Haven. You could always count on rain when you needed it. I needed it to wash. I would feel clean when I went back.

I shut my eyes tightly and tried to see boxes like Amy saw. She always used to tell me about the boxes in her head and how they'd close in tighter and tighter. Sometimes, she said, they were red boxes and sometimes they didn't have any color at all. That's why she took sleeping pills. She mostly saw the boxes at night and they wouldn't let her sleep. Before I knew Amy I used to go to sleep with visions of football players or new clothes, but after living with her for a while I didn't see anything at night. She used to try to get me to see the boxes, too, but I couldn't. I told her I couldn't imagine anything with no color. She said that was because I was shallow but eventually I might learn. But no matter how tightly I squeezed my eyes shut all I could every see was black. I made one last try on the bench but I still couldn't see boxes.

I wondered if Amy was crying while she packed. I doubted it. I think she only cried when I was around. She couldn't possibly cry when I wasn't there too. I don't think anyone has that many tears in them. She cried all the time with me there. Over the craziest things, too. I think the first time was over her eyebrows. We'd only been living together a few days when she said she wanted eyebrows like mine. Hers were thick and nearly met in the center of her forehead. She said she wanted to tweeze them but didn't know how. Would I do it for her. So she lay face up on my bed and I straddled her like a horse; my legs spread over her stomach and I leaned over her face with my tweezers, but as I pulled out a hair she moaned loudly and I didn't want to do it anymore. I got off her. "Pluck your own eyebrows," I said.

Her eyes got all watery and her lips curled up. "Why won't you do it," she cried.

"Because I don't want to hurt you."

That made her stop crying. She shook her head and smiled,

"Joanne, don't you understand anything? There is some pain that isn't pain at all."

I didn't understand.

"Why do you hate me?" she shouted.

"I don't hate you. I just don't want to pluck your eyebrows."

That made her cry so much I finally did it. I did a lousy job because I hurried through it, but she didn't seem to mind that it didn't look too good.

She carried on that way with exercising, too. She would always watch me do my sit-ups at night. Then one day she said she'd like to start doing them with me. I didn't care until we actually did it. We lay side by side and pushed our bodies up and back, like a see-saw; as I came up she went down. Our faces were red. Quickly our breathing became audible and we began to sweat. We went up and down faster and faster. We lost count but didn't stop until Amy squeaked and lay back panting and grinning. I felt dizzy and got up to take a shower. She came into the bathroom and talked to me through the curtain. "That was great, she said. "I think I'll do that with you all the time."

"I don't know if I'm going to be doing sit-ups anymore," I said as I lathered my stomach for the third or fourth time.

"Why not?" she demanded.

"I don't know. They're really not such good exercise. I think I'm going to start playing squash again."

"Will you teach me how to play?"

"Amy, I'm really not very good at teaching people. I loose patience too quickly."

"Well, can't you play squash and do sit-ups?"

"I can, but I don't want to."

"Why not?"

"Because I just don't. If you like sit-ups so much do them yourself."

"You just don't want to do them with me. You won't help anyone with anything." She was crying again. "You don't care if I'm fat. You don't care about anyone but yourself. You won't even take five minutes a night to help me. You're hateful, you know."

By this time I already knew that, so I began to cry, too, at being reminded again.

I was hateful. I took advantage of her. Amy was the one who



cooked and cleaned. I never did any of that. She did the shopping. She typed my papers for me and she was forever taking me out to dinner. All she wanted in return was for me to let her love me. I don't even know if she cared if I loved her back, but I wouldn't let her. I made that clear when I bought the cameo for myself when I knew how badly she wanted to buy it for me. We had been shopping one afternoon when I saw a cameo necklace that I fell in love with. I was deciding whether to buy it or not, as it was rather expensive, when Amy said she wanted to buy it for me. She said she didn't have the money yet but she would in a week so would I please wait and let her get it for me. I said no. It was too much money, but she kept insisting and I was afraid she was going to make a scene in the store so I said okay. But the next day I went back and bought it for myself. I didn't even really want it any more, but I didn't want her to get it for me either. When I came back wearing it, she said I was the most horrible person she ever knew. That I deny everyone who might care for me any pleasure. That I was incapable of any kind of emotion. Then she ignored me for the rest of the night until I cried and asked her to forgive me. She did. She always forgave me, but I knew she didn't really deep inside because every once in a while she'd remind me of what I did even though I never wore the cameo after that.

I wondered if I looked strange sitting on a bench in the New Haven Green in the rain. No one else was doing that. I certainly stuck out. Anyone who happened to look at the Green would notice me right away. I remembered the time Amy and I hitchhiked up to Springfield to this county fair. We went because I was in the mood for steamed clams and we figured we could get some good ones there. It was a real big fair and very crowded by the time we got there, so I said to Amy: "We really should find some meeting place in case we get separated. I don't want to hitch back alone."



She said that wasn't necessary. She'd be able to find me in the crowd. I didn't understand that. I don't have red hair and I'm not very tall. I don't have any of the characteristics one usually associates with a person who stands out in a group. But she was right because we did get separated and she found me soon after.

I heard the chapel bell ring seven times. Amy would be gone by now. She was probably gone hours ago. Soon I'll go back. The first thing I'm going to do when I get back is move my desk into the den. Then I'll line the shelves with my books, putting them in alphabetical order according to author. Maybe I'll move the plants in, too. The rain was beginning to let up. Soon I'll go back. I hope she didn't leave me a letter. If she did, I won't read it. I'll tear it up in little pieces. She'd better have gotten all her things out, too, because I won't save them for her. If I find something of hers, I'll throw it away. I won't have her coming back with the excuse that she left something. I'll say "Sorry, I threw it away," and slam the door in her face. Yeah. Soon I'll go back.

A cool breeze came with the end of the rain. It dried my hand and face but left them very cold. I pulled a pack of cigarettes from my pocketbook, inhaled, and stared at the orange ember. It looked so bright in the dark. I inhaled again and then ground it out on the palm of my free hand to see if it would hurt.

— Binnie Kirshenbaum

## *Jelly Fish*

*when one idle august swelter  
the sun melted like butterscotch  
candy and my world was as small  
as the pretty shells i caressed  
in my hand, i spied you hugging  
the grainy earth like a dead fly  
stuck to a wall, while the fingertips  
of the sea worked to pry you loose*

*child curiosity dared me  
to poke at you with a long stick  
hoping to ease your runny  
egglike body back into the dark  
mystery water before  
the monster in you could creep  
any further up my spine  
but the rubbery hardness of your  
watery-looking flesh startled  
my innocent intentions  
bouncing back at me like raw liver  
resisting a dull knife—i threw  
the contaminated stick aside*

*now  
beneath the velvet shadows of dawn  
the monster, emerging once more  
clever as a chameleon  
wears his nakedness like a mask,  
fine silk white threads, a mile  
of thin bloodless veins delicately  
embroidered into a network  
of stop-sign design pretending  
like gauze to hide a nasty  
brown-red bruise below, weeping  
like a festering sore*

*but i cannot be tricked by this  
subtle disguise to bargain your  
fate, abandoned her on the shore  
of my island solitaire  
like an orphaned child useless to yourself  
when hungry gulls test you with needle  
beaks, the sun like a 1000-watt  
bulb baking you hard as marble  
stone*

— Karen Kmetzo

## Excerpt from CONSUMMATION

. . . He set out from the truck-stop about dawn and by mid-morning had made it half way across Iowa, where his rides abruptly ended. For the next several hours he walked without getting a single ride. The rain became his constant companion, and after a while it seemed that it had never been any other way. So it was that when the rain *did* stop, he just stood there for a long moment with rain in his shoes and his thumb wriggling uselessly in the air. These things had become so familiar to him that he was only brought out of his insensibility by the sound of the rain water in the ditch, rolling along without the secondary beats of rain itself. With the realization came the desire for rest, and so he paused for a moment, disgusted with the highway, daydreaming.

There it was in his mind's eye—the last time, recalled by this odor of spring and rainwater, he and Sara making love early on Easter Sunday a year ago in the woods behind her house. He pushed the association further: his grandparents taking him to play in the playground across the street from their house, and all the while being tantalized by their descriptions of the massive Sunday dinner his Aunt Betty from Georgia was “whippin up” in the kitchen. “What the hell,” he said to himself, “there’s no place I have to be and no one waiting for me.” And with that, slung his backpack onto his shoulders and headed towards the access road, not really knowing or caring where he would end up.

He must have hiked at least an hour down County RR3 before he even saw a sign tattooed on a fencepost as to where a town might be, so old and battered that it gave him hope that the place would be small and clean, the kind of place he’d heard of but never seen, an echo of a particular past.

At first there were only farmhouses separated by long fields under orderly cultivation, but after a mile or two they began coming closer together, where the corn was all in gardens and the toilets indoors. They were uniformly made of wood with stone foundations, with open white porches with swinging benches, a cracked concrete sidewalk dotted with anthills running up to rotting stairsteps, and the smell of chicken steaming out of open windows. Inside, he could hear the steady whirr of a portable fan, the rise and fall of nasal voices. For a moment he wanted more than



anything to be able to walk through the door of any of these houses and sit down, to have them call him by name, know his history, and help him keep his illusions organized. But instead he watched the crows leap from the wires into space, and his feet somehow kept moving, one foot in front of the other, the dust moiling about them.

It was dusk when he entered the town at last. It was small, symmetrical, laid out around a central square with its attendant Woolworths, Rexalls, Sam&Mabel's Grocery, Jack's Bar. It was this last that he entered to purchase 2 six-packs of beer and some pretzels from his rapidly dwindling supply of cash. The place was filled with "regulars" and he was glad to be able to get in and out quickly: he wanted above all to survey the square in peace.

Outside he leaned in the doorway and attempted to take stock of the heart of the town. The park was laid out in a perfect square, lined with willows, oaks, and elms at its perimeters and along the diagonal walkways, while in the interior rosebuds and lilacs held sway. To the southeast was a children's playground, and near the northwest corner was an old-fashioned bandshell (he tried to imagine orchestras and people dancing, but failed—it seemed too completely unused and wholly surrendered to ivy), while in the center the inevitable church commanded everything about it. Originally a white clapboard affair, it had evidently been remodeled in the last thirty years, in stone, (or rather that seemed to have been the intent, had been abandoned, and left a hybrid) and it seemed to him an almost fitting parallel that as he gazed the light should be fading, dimming its outline.

He shivered and felt the entire square wavering in his vision, as if he were in the presence of something long familiar, inexplicably changing shape, giving the lie to memory. That somehow the smooth, wellworn ease of the benches, the languid embrace of the willows, the neatly formulated design of the place, all were doomed to become as fluid and indistinct as himself, dissolved in the blue wash of the oncoming evening. He could no longer approach, he realized, anything with the assurance that it would gain focus, or individualized shape, through mere physical exertion. Still, he felt much more comfortable when his legs, almost involuntarily, skipped

forward, and he felt himself pointed towards the most illuminated object in the park—the church.

Seated a moment later before the front of the church, he was pleased with the decisive action he felt he had taken, for here he discovered a small, gas, “eternal flame”, placed there by a veterans’ group. This, then, explained the change in usage the church had undergone: it had become a war memorial, a bronze plaque was mounted upon a stone tableau, inscribed with the names of the town’s dead youth who lay “buried in foreign lands”. So now, in the light of the vibrating flame, he felt a kinship with these names, as if a series of common notes had bound them together, a chord of memory, the romantic strains of a sense of the past, in a solitary place, come home to rest. It was with this sense of well-being, then, that he felt sufficiently relaxed to deal with his letters.

For days now, ever since he’d picked them up in St. Louis, he had avoided the fact of their presence, knowing that the dreary stamp of the New York Post Office, “not at this address”, upon all his letters to Sara would only depress him. They were a dead weight upon him: a series of massive quotidian notations and anxious outpourings returned unread, thoughts, ideas, feelings so immediate that he had mailed them quickly, so as to seal their finality. Now they were on his hands again, far too painful to re-read, and too bulky to keep. There was only one thing he could do (in keeping with the spirit of the place), so, one by one, he burned them, rejoicing in the mechanics of their destruction.

The flame sputtered as it consumed them, and he drew closer to share in its warmth, staring as if hypnotized as they turned to ashes, and fluttered from sight. There was nothing to do now but to have his dinner and find a place to sleep.

Inside his backpack he found his church-key and opened the first bottle of beer. It was still very cold (the bartender had taken it from the bottom shelf of the bar’s refrigerator) and he drank it smoothly, but rapidly, letting the beer roll down his throat in long gulps, filling up the hollow places in his chest with the first three bottles. He shivered, and began to drink more slowly, letting the dough from the pretzels float freely in his mouth, and relishing the sharp edge the salt made upon his tongue. Soon the first six and half of the pretzels were gone, and he slowed a little more as he began the



second. It had been a damned long time since he'd felt this good. It was like the times when he would get drunk with Tommy in the woods behind Tom's house, when the two of them were in high school together, and he remembered the same delicious feeling of sin, as the beer had inevitably been stolen from their parents in some ingenious manner or another. They would sit out there, half the night sometimes, just drinking and talking, planning their futures and dreaming big dreams, always big dreams, in a place where no one could find them. They wanted the same things, then, basically, and it was all the same between the two of them, eternal friends.

He must have dozed-off for a while: his legs had gone numb, and he was aware of a bitter taste in his mouth, the sound of drunken voices echoing in the street, the loud, scraping shuffle of leather soles on the pavement. The last customers from Jack's were spilling out into the night, and he watched them as they swayed beneath the streetlamps, beginning their uncertain dance towards home. They were old men, mostly, men who'd never learned to deal with things properly, probably ruined by women, the way *he* might be in twenty years. But there was no time to think about that now, what he needed was a good place to sleep where the cops wouldn't bother him.

Over by the bandshell he made out a dark clump of bushes, right up against the wall, and thick enough to conceal him. He slung his backpack over his shoulders, and crossed the open ground between the church and the bandshell with exaggerated caution.

The moon at last had freed itself from the cloudbank and, as he walked, his ear caught the whirring clicks and arpeggios of the crickets, surrounding him as when he was a child. Even the sky seemed friendlier than it had before, and as he lay rolled up in his blanket, it was as if he were seeing everything for the first time: how the stars flattened themselves out against the folds of the sky, and how the moonlight made deep pools upon the grass. "It's all the *same*, really," he said to himself, as he shut his eyes and fell into a dreamless sleep, never once thinking about Sara or anything else not his own.

— Jeff Tedford

## If Her Face Turned Red

It's been at least four and a half years since I last saw her, I can't remember her name. But that's not surprising since I never knew her well. But when I did know her (if only a little) and her name, she was "too young for me." That saying, "too young for me" I'm sure brings connotations to everyone's mind. We've all heard the phrase before. But four and a half years ago that phrase was a very powerful force in my life. It boomed in my head telling me "hands off." It wasn't something that had to be said out loud or even inferred. The guidelines were laid out and I followed them. I was 17, she was 13 and because she was only 13 she was beyond a certain line. She was too young and I should never touch her, or even think it. And, in fact, I didn't. From the first moment I saw her I subdued all impulses, subconsciously, automatically.

But I must have cared for her. Because swirling in the back of my memory is her face: chubby cheeks, freckles, small crinkled nose and big, round blue-gray eyes. There are many other faces in my past, in my memory. But most I don't care to focus on, why make the effort? But in her case there is no effort involved and that tells me that I must have cared. But social laws, if broken, carry stiff penalties. So the sound of her laughter was as close as I ever got.

Time is a never-ending march forward. Always concentrating on the present, always putting significance on the future and always making vague the past. It has caused me to forget other things besides her name, things that are most important to me. I can't remember the first time I saw her or the last. I can't remember how many times we spoke or what we spoke about. I can't remember the essence of a single one of our conversations. All that is left are a few scenes in my memory. Like a series of still pictures sliding through a projector. And a feeling, or actually two feelings. The way I felt when I saw her before she changed and the way I felt after.

One scene took place on a bus taking me, and several others, on a weekly roller skating outing. The bus was red and its seats were



green and torn and you bounced up and down in them whenever the bus hit a bump. It was an old bus and the "shocks" were bad so the bumps came often. The trips were at night but it wasn't ever dark inside due to the constant stream of neon flowing in from signs going by outside.

I was usually quiet on the bus although I was with a group of people who were my "friends." She was quite, too. Quieter than I was. I would make an occasional joke or call someone an "asshole" for teasing me. But she was always silent. Some weeks the girls her age would talk to me and giggle and whisper to each other. Then they would tell me they were 15 when I knew that they weren't. Other weeks I would sit with her, for at least part of the trip. We would talk and her face would turn red and I would feel a hotness in my cheeks and know my face was red also. Then the other girls her age would lean over the back of their seats and show me their new hair-dos and tell me they were 15 or 16. And I would look at her hair which was straight and scraggly and hung down seemingly uncombed. She would never talk about her hair.

Another scene was in a small church where many of my friends were putting on a Christmas play. I didn't go to church so I wasn't in the play but I was there to watch. As I arrived and looked for a seat, I told myself I didn't belong in a church. I thought I should have been at a party, drinking. I'm sure I would have dwelled on that thought throughout the play had I not sat down next to her.

It was warm in the church. If you left your hand on the wooden pew too long, it would stick to the laquer finish. The lights were dimmed for the play and I could barely see her sitting next to me. But we whispered back and forth and I made her laugh and she covered her mouth with her hand so her laughter wouldn't get us into trouble. She whispered to me to stop making her laugh and later she confessed that she have never laughed so much. "Why does it have to be now, when I can't laugh out loud? My sides hurt." The dim lights were yellow and her face was golden, so I couldn't

tell if her face had turned red again. But I could see that her hair was still scraggly.

After the play was over I was with my friends, talking to a girl named Debbie (who everyone said liked me). The younger girls were giggling and telling me they were fifteen. I looked around and found her standing with her parents who were talking to another couple. I looked at her and decided it hadn't been such a bad idea to attend the play after all.

I didn't see her again for six months. I can't remember why exactly and it doesn't very much matter now. When I did see her again it was summer, June, at a picnic. It was overcast that day and warm and humid. It was early in the day and the grass was still wet. That meant that your sneakers got soaked and you didn't bend so much to field a ground ball. I was late, one of the last to arrive.

I had been there an hour and was having a good time playing softball, when I saw her. At first, as if I wasn't sure it was she, I moved for a closer look. But the closer look wasn't really necessary. I recognized her. I just didn't want to believe it was she. The uncombed hair had been replaced by a style that, I felt, made her look downright ugly. And she whispered with her friends and giggled. But it was her movements that shocked me more than anything else. They had always been so controlled, so inhibited, so "dainty" you might say. As I stood there I saw her run up to a boy, push him from behind and run back to her friends. Then whisper and giggle.

Almost in a daze I walked over to a tree, sat down and leaned against it. One phrase repeated over in my head, "She's changed," until finally I was forced to say it aloud, "She's changed!" I didn't like it, I knew that. "Innocence," that's the word I used, "She's lost her

innocence." "Conformity," I thought of that too, "She's conformed but she doesn't need to be like everyone else." Right then I wanted to spring up and talk to her, tell her she didn't have to fix up her hair and act like everyone else; I certainly didn't! But instead of springing up I sat there and realized that was exactly why I wouldn't talk to her, because I didn't.

She was growing up (she was 14 by then) and she was probably able to see that being shy would not lead to happiness. The change seemed startling to me, like night and day. But for her it was probably slow and difficult. In the long run it didn't really matter whether her new outgoing image was just a cover-up, make-up to hide her fear. Because if she kept it up long enough the day would come when no make-up would be needed. She may not always have been sure of what she was doing or if it was right. But I'm sure she could see things. See that a person who doesn't make contact is left alone. It goes beyond being right or wrong. Fixing her hair and giggling had become necessary to her.

All at once I knew exactly why I felt so badly. She was shedding her inhibitions, while I still had mine. She was advancing and leaving me behind.

Later that day, just before it began to rain, just after I had tried to talk to a girl named Beth but had failed miserably, I turned around and she was standing in front of me. She told me she had just turned sixteen and that I was cute. Then she ran over to her friends to whisper and giggle.

Now I'm pulling at my memory, but I can't recall, when she spoke to me then, if her face turned red.

— B.J. Levene

## *Pa*

*Even now I think of you,  
You with your coal-black hair and eyes  
That made you look like Dempsey on  
The best day he ever knew.  
I think of you strong and loose,  
Leaning back, feet up, an easy slouch  
Cleaning shotguns, reading racing forms  
And drinking coffee.  
"What's your future going to be?" you asked.  
"What was yours?" I shot, cruel and quick.  
It was an old reflex, too fast, too much with me  
Like the hands of a fighter just retired.  
I'd hated you once.  
But not that day.*

— John Perry







*Cover design by Michelle Antil and Scott Simone.*

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it  
stood isolated, — — — — —  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast  
surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament,  
filament, out of itself  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly  
speeding them.  
And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless  
oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing  
seeking the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd,  
till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling  
catch somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman